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Letter dated 1 August 2011 from the Permanent Representative of Finland to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to submit the report of the workshop for newly elected and present Security Council members, which was held on 18 and 19 November 2010 at the Arrowwood Conference Center (see annex). The present report has been compiled in accordance with the Chatham House rules under the sole responsibility of the Permanent Mission of Finland.

On the basis of the very positive feedback we have received each year from the participants, the Government of Finland remains committed to sponsoring the workshop as an annual event. The Government of Finland hopes that the report will not only help to familiarize newly elected members with the working methods and procedures of the Council, but also will contribute to a better understanding among the wider United Nations membership of the complexity of the Council's work.

I should be grateful, accordingly, if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Jarmo **Viinanen**
Ambassador
Permanent Mission of Finland to the United Nations

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Annex to the letter dated 1 August 2011 from the Permanent Representative of Finland to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

"Hitting the ground running": eighth annual workshop for newly elected members of the Security Council

18 and 19 November 2010
Arrowwood Conference Center
Rye Brook, New York

The Government of Finland, in cooperation with the International Peace Institute and the Security Council Affairs Division of the United Nations Secretariat, convened the eighth annual workshop for the newly elected members of the Security Council on 18 and 19 November 2010.

The annual autumn workshops have served to help familiarize the newly elected members with the practice, procedure and working methods of the Security Council so that they are in a position to "hit the ground running" when they join the Council the following January. The series has also provided current members of the Council with an opportunity to reflect on their work in an informal setting.

This year, the opening evening featured remarks by Sir Mark Lyall Grant, Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations and President of the Security Council for November 2010, and a keynote address by Sir Brian Urquhart, former United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Special Political Affairs.

The full-day programme on 19 November included three round-table sessions that focused on the following themes:

I. State of the Council 2010: taking stock and looking ahead

II. Working methods and subsidiary bodies

III. Lessons learned: reflections of the class of 2010

Opening remarks

Ambassador Lyall Grant thanked the outgoing members of the Security Council — Austria, Japan, Mexico, Turkey and Uganda — for their work over the previous two years, stating that they had made a significant contribution to the Council's work individually and collectively. He also welcomed the incoming members of the Council — Colombia, Germany, India, Portugal and South Africa — underscoring that the other Council members were looking forward to working with them. He also thanked Mr. Jarmo Viinanen, Permanent Representative of Finland to the United Nations, and the Finnish Government for once again sponsoring the "Hitting the ground running" workshop.

Ambassador Lyall Grant called the Security Council by far the most effective and adaptable of the United Nations bodies. He offered three observations about the Council's work that had struck him since he arrived in New York, in 2009.

First, he was surprised by the formulaic nature of much of the Security Council's work and by its rules of procedure that inhibit more spontaneous debate.

He commented that there may be a need for Council members to break out of their comfort zones and to move toward more informal and interactive consultations.

Secondly, he suggested that the Security Council does not always prioritize its time well. He noted that, during the United Kingdom's presidency in November 2010, of the 27 items on the calendar, 17 were of a routine nature dictated by the rhythm of normal events, five were in reaction to current developments and five were discretionary elements proposed by the United Kingdom. In his view, consideration should therefore be given to adapting the agenda so that it is not largely driven by routine mandate renewals and the calendar.

Thirdly, Ambassador Lyall Grant commented that he had noticed among members of the Security Council a desire to be more active in conflict prevention and resolution. He noted that this would require members to use more of their collective authority in those areas, as most of the Council's time was currently spent on conflict management.

Ambassador Lyall Grant highlighted what he considered to be some of the Security Council's successes in the preceding months, including on such issues as the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and women, peace and security. On the other hand, he pointed out that the Council had been unable to make significant progress on long-running disputes related to peace in the Middle East, Cyprus, Western Sahara and Somalia.

He concluded by projecting that the Security Council was likely to be at least as busy in 2011 as it had been in 2010. While the Council had already invested significant time and effort on the Sudan, he added that this issue could well prove to be a significant short-term test for Council members in 2011.

Keynote speaker

Sir Brian Urquhart recalled that he had attended the first meeting of the Security Council, evoking the great expectations that accompanied its creation. At the time, it was anticipated that the Council's members would abandon their national instincts in order to concentrate entirely on world peace, addressing problems of war and peace and prosperity and economic depression in a way that had never been done before.

However, he underscored that the Security Council was soon challenged to meet the world's expectations during the Cold War. As a highly publicized institution, backed by the Super Powers, that aspired to deal with aggression and maintain peace and security in the world, the Council's effectiveness was handicapped by the 40-year nuclear stand-off between the United States of America and the former Soviet Union.

Nevertheless, according to Sir Brian, the Security Council was not completely paralysed during the Cold War, managing to address some very serious crises. For example, it appointed a mediator in Palestine during the first Arab-Israeli War. It interceded to quell the tension between India and Pakistan over Kashmir. He added that, during those years, elected and permanent members alike frequently facilitated decisions on key issues before the Council.

According to Sir Brian, the Security Council became a productive place for improvisation during the Cold War. It had some substantial successes while

considering a large number of issues. It established a serious plan for the pacification of the Middle East and the settlement of the Kashmir issue, even though these plans have not yet been fulfilled. It also put in place the main elements of a settlement in Cyprus. The Council was also active in advancing the techniques of international cooperation to keep the peace, a particularly critical function during the Cold War because of the grave threat of nuclear war.

Sir Brian praised the performance of many of the Ambassadors who had served on the Security Council since its inception. He noted that their imaginative participation helped to transform the Council — founded on the false assumption that the Second World War allies would band together to keep the peace — into a body that was nonetheless very practical. Although not mentioned in the Charter of the United Nations, peacekeeping is one of the Council's great innovations, he observed. It has also developed various instruments for negotiating and investigating that have been important tools for maintaining international peace and security.

According to Sir Brian, 1986 marked a critical change in the dynamics of the Security Council. Relations among the permanent members began to improve, as they came together to address the war between the Islamic Republic of Iran and Iraq. The following year, President Mikhail Gorbachev of the Soviet Union called for greater use of the Council and its tools, such as preventive diplomacy, mediation and peacekeeping. By the end of the Cold War, according to Sir Brian, new global challenges began to emerge with which the Council was not accustomed to dealing. During the first Gulf War, the Council authorized the expulsion of Iraqi forces from Kuwait; the last great Chapter VII operation, in his view. While inter-State conflicts were becoming less frequent, complicated internal conflicts, characterized by insurrectionist movements, refugee situations and immense civilian hardship and misery, were proliferating.

In Sir Brian's assessment, the Security Council has adapted well to this new environment. It has repeatedly authorized peace operations within the borders of countries. Virtually all of the peace operations of the 1990s dealt with civil insurrections and inter-communal violence within States. Faced with new challenges to peace and security, the Council proceeded to innovate, to become increasingly active and to more broadly interpret the provisions of the Charter. While the Council has had its share of successes and failures over the years, in the end it seems to come through most of the time.

At this point, noted Sir Brian, it will be interesting to see how the Security Council handles emerging global problems that many believe to have security implications. Climate change, for example, could produce severe weather patterns that could lead to enormous migrations from flooded areas. Likewise, in the near future, more and more people could be living in water-stressed areas, where there simply is not enough water to sustain the population. Sir Brian expressed his hope that the Council will be able to address such emerging threats to peace and security.

In conclusion, Sir Brian underscored that the Security Council is a lively and constructive body in which decisions on relatively obscure matters can potentially build upon each other, thereby generating substantive progress over time. He reminded the incoming members that individual members of the Council can put forward ideas that lead to other ideas that will eventually lead to long-term

solutions, thus setting one more stone in the bridge from conflict to peace and security. That is the challenge and the promise of Council membership.

Session I
State of the Council 2010: taking stock and looking ahead

Moderator:

Ambassador Gérard Araud
Permanent Representative of France

Commentators:

Ambassador Ivan Barbalić
Permanent Representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina

Ambassador Emmanuel Issoze-Ngondet
Permanent Representative of Gabon

Ambassador Wang Min
Deputy Permanent Representative of China

Session I provided an opportunity for members of the Security Council to reflect on the current state of the Council's work and to look ahead to the challenges that it will face in the coming months and years. The session focused on trends in the Council's agenda, workload and productivity; conflict prevention and peacebuilding; and its partnerships with regional organizations.

Trends in the agenda, workload and productivity of the Security Council

At the opening session, a number of participants noted that the Security Council continues to have a very heavy workload, notwithstanding the decline in recent years in the number of formal meetings, informal consultations, presidential statements and resolutions documented in the background paper prepared for the workshop by Professor Edward C. Luck. Indeed, there was broad agreement that the Council remains the most productive and dynamic body in the United Nations system. It was acknowledged, however, that this workload places a great burden on delegations. One participant noted that this is a consequence of the Council becoming a quasi-executive body for monitoring and managing crises related to an expanding set of cross-cutting issues. For example, the crisis in Guinea-Bissau required consideration of the issues of organized crime and drug trafficking. Similarly, the example of terrorism in the Sahel was also cited.

One speaker observed that the mandate of the Security Council is the same as it has always been. As is well known, the Charter entrusts the Council with the primary responsibility of maintaining international peace and security. This has not changed, but the issues the Council deals with are growing increasingly complex. The Council continues to work on inter-State conflicts, but now also deals with "fragile situations" within countries, which has led to debates about national sovereignty. The Council, according to this participant, is taking on cross-cutting issues, including human rights, humanitarian assistance, the rule of law, the protection of women and children, counter-terrorism, non-proliferation and election-related disputes, and this engagement on such a wide range of issues partly explains

its heavy workload. The number of consultations necessary to address such issues has left little time for reflection or strategic planning. Another discussant expressed great disappointment over the lack of strategic debate, as "strategic doesn't mean stratospheric". The speaker called for strategic debates about Somalia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where millions of lives are at stake.

Several participants commented on the need for more opportunities for strategic thinking. One noted that the Security Council is in a position to have a profound strategic impact on issues of peace and security. Council resolutions and presidential statements carry a strong political message that can give guidance to the international community in helping to coordinate various actors involved in conflict resolution. The Sudan is a prime example. However, in order to be more effective, the Council needs a more strategic perspective.

Another participant remarked that if it was possible for the Security Council to free up more time for long-term thinking, it ought to be looking beyond the horizon and asking what are the threats of the future that are not being discussed today. What will be the threats to international peace and security in 10 to 25 years? Should the members of the Council not be thinking about water shortages, bio-threats, pandemics and cyber threats? In essence, the Council needed to become more forward-looking and creative, to move beyond its "four walls" and to get out of its "comfort zone". Finally, the Council should become more informed about what the young people of the world want, since they are the majority in many parts of the world.

Another speaker agreed that the Security Council needed to break the cycle of rigidity and to adapt to a changing world. To properly consider these new issues, more flexibility and pragmatism are needed. One participant argued that the Council could be criticized as being fairly "academic" on this point. For example, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime appeared twice before the Council to present issues in a forceful manner, but the Council still has not reached the point of taking action in response. On a number of emerging transnational security threats, the more lively debates are taking place in other forums, away from the Council.

With regard to the Security Council's scope of action, another speaker agreed that it is still too narrowly focused on conflict management rather than on conflict resolution or prevention. Prevention should have a larger place on the Council's agenda. In this regard, however, the Council has handled the situation in the Sudan very well. In the future, the Council will have to address the security ramifications of climate change and other "new global challenges". This is a contentious issue that will inspire debates about sovereignty, but if the Council does not take up the issue of climate change, the Group of Twenty (G-20) or other bodies will. The question will be how to do so in a practical fashion. Another speaker agreed that climate change was an issue that the Council would have to address, but that first there is a need to define and analyse the aspects of the problem that were most relevant to peace and security. Only then would the Council be able to determine the best course of action.

One commentator suggested envisioning the work of the Security Council along two tracks: the short term and the long term. In the short term, it is of course necessary to respond to the immediate crises and threats arising at any given moment. That is the prime responsibility of the Council. However, it is also important to consider how its day-to-day work can contribute to long-term change

for the improvement of international peace and security. On the one hand, the Council's annual report mentions little or no movement on a number of persistent problems, including the Middle East, Cyprus and Western Sahara. Can the Council change the dynamics of such long-term conflicts? On the other hand, it adds real value on thematic issues, such as women and peace and security, children and armed conflict and the protection of civilians. The Council has made important contributions to the evolution of international values, norms and standards. These developments are most evident if the Council's work is seen over a period of 10 to 15 years. It is in these normative aspects of the Council's efforts that the influence of its non-permanent members has been most apparent.

Looking ahead, one speaker noted that, in the coming year, the Security Council will continue to address the issues of the Sudan, Somalia and the Middle East, on which there will be ample space for diplomatic and preventive efforts, challenging the Council to live up to its mandate. In the coming year, the Council should redefine its relationships with regional organizations, while working to strengthen the peacebuilding dimensions of its work, which will require closer collaboration with the Peacebuilding Commission.

Another participant suggested that the future focus of the Security Council should be on the major issues threatening international peace and security. Two thirds of the issues on the Council agenda related to Africa. The Council should thus devote more time and resources to addressing situations in Africa, in coordination with the African Union and other regional and subregional organizations. The Council should engage in more preventive diplomacy and be prudent when applying sanctions or resorting to pressure. Furthermore, the Council should make every effort to take decisions by consensus. Unanimous decisions, such as the recent presidential statement on the Sudan (S/PRST/2010/24 of 16 November 2010), send the strongest signals.

Peacekeeping

One member wondered aloud how much of the Security Council's work is absorbed by peace operations. If one looks at peacekeeping from outside the United Nations, two things are striking: the proliferation of missions and their longevity. Some missions have been in place for 50 years, and this is a problem. One explanation is that the Council is most involved when conflicts emerge or re-emerge and is less involved in the long-term oversight of missions. The speaker welcomed the thematic debate on exit strategies and the suggestion that peacekeeping missions ought to exit earlier so as to make room for longer-term peacebuilding efforts. According to another participant, the Council had made significant progress in defining the transition and exit strategies of peacekeeping operations, including during the debate on this subject in February 2010.

On the issue of exit strategy, several participants noted that the Security Council has been confronted by a new trend of host countries requesting a premature pullout or modification of a mission's mandate. Such demands posed an unusual and uncomfortable situation for the Council, and one meriting further discussion of how to improve host-country relations. The related issue of relations with troop-contributing countries was raised by another speaker. Urging greater Council engagement with the troop-contributing countries, this participant

contended that more extensive engagement with those working in the field would lead to better, more informed decision-making in New York.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo had posed a long-standing test for the Security Council and its mandates, according to one of the speakers. It is a huge country that presents many extraordinary challenges for peacekeeping. Given these challenges, a higher level of understanding between actors is essential. The views of actors on the ground should be taken into account when decisions are being made and mandates considered in New York. Designing proper mandates is difficult enough, but securing the prerequisites for fully carrying out mandates often proves even more challenging. Paying for so many peacekeeping missions may also strain the system. Too often, according to another commentator, the Council decides upon operations without adequate financial estimates and without the proper military means to implement them.

One discussant suggested that there has been a lack of civil and military coordination in the Sudan. The military needs to have more of a voice at the United Nations. The United Nations is full of brave, courageous people, but there needs to be more communication between its Blue Helmets and its civilian staff. Concurring that there is a striking lack of military expertise at the Security Council, another participant commented that one hardly sees any Generals at the Council. In comparison to an organization such as NATO, the limited nature of United Nations procedures and mechanisms for handling military affairs is striking. For example, there is no chain of command. Though such deficits might have been acceptable during the days of traditional peacekeeping missions, such as in Cyprus, they are not compatible with overseeing such large and complex missions as those in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Another participant proposed that peacekeeping be the subject of a strategic debate in the Security Council. Offering support for the initiative proposed by the United Kingdom and France, the speaker suggested that there should be more strategic discussion within the Council about peacekeeping practices. Noting that the Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations meets at the expert level, the participant recommended that it hold some meetings at the ambassadorial level, which should also include the participation of military advisers.

In crafting peacekeeping mandates, one speaker argued that Security Council-mandated missions should be based on a "standard" template entailing specific irreducible minimum tasks to be accomplished. Beyond this minimum, of course, every mandate should also be specifically tailored to the concrete realities on the ground. This participant contended that the monitoring of human rights should be one such standard provision of peacekeeping mandates. Without such a provision, missions could easily be undermined. On the other hand, several speakers lamented the tendency for peacekeeping mandates to become "Christmas trees" with too many tasks and too little prioritization.

Conflict prevention and post-conflict peacebuilding

There was broad agreement that the maintenance of international peace and security necessarily involves conflict prevention, as underscored in Article 1 (1) of the Charter. However, one discussant reminded the workshop that the Security Council cannot do it alone. Regional organizations and the United Nations Secretariat, including the Secretary-General and the Department of Political Affairs,

are continuously engaged in conflict prevention. The role of the Council is to provide the mandate and to support those actors in the best position to achieve results and then to hold them accountable. For example, the Department of Political Affairs currently does not have the proper resources. In joining those calling for more emphasis on conflict prevention, one discussant noted that the Department had to call a pledging conference to mobilize funds for its prevention work. The Council must see to it that the Department has the proper support.

According to another participant, there is a need to build consensus on the issue of prevention, and to put it into practice. Contending that scarce resources would be most efficiently spent on investments in conflict prevention and resolution, the speaker called for a clear "paradigm shift" in this direction. Priority should be given to reading the warning signs and to putting concrete measures in place to avoid the outbreak of conflict, instead of waiting for crises requiring the expensive deployment of troops.

Another speaker suggested that there are some divergent views among the members of the Security Council on the scope and nature of its work. Was the Council designed to be a body that could consider only full-blown crises, or one that could also address potential crises while they are still possible to contain? Another member responded that there is no dispute over whether prevention is within the scope of the Council's work. However, there are distinct perspectives on how and when to go about it.

A speaker characterized the Security Council's systematic programme of work on the Sudan as a positive example of conflict prevention. Over the past six months, the Council had held frequent meetings on these matters and also undertook a mission there in October. This represented an intensive engagement and involved a lot of work. A similar commitment is needed in other cases. For example, nothing of similar scale has been undertaken with regard to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The participant acknowledged that, in some respects, the Sudan is a relatively straightforward case to address as it is already on the Council's agenda and two large missions have been deployed there. Most places in need of conflict prevention are not in the same position. According to the speaker, the Council should not restrict its discussions to situations that are on its formal agenda. The speaker suggested that the point of prevention is, in fact, to keep countries from becoming an item on the Council's agenda in the first place. To become more effective at conflict prevention, the Council should act in as agile and flexible a manner as possible.

Another member agreed that the Security Council is more capable of addressing issues that are already on its agenda. Addressing new situations inevitably leads to debates about whether they should be placed on the agenda. In that regard, a participant suggested that the Council make better use of the "other matters" item of its agenda as an opportunity to raise new issues. By adding an unpredictable element, Ambassadors would have an incentive to stay for the duration of Council sessions. According to several participants, most items considered by the Council stem from domestic issues, which raises all sorts of disputes about sovereignty and the proper role of the Council. While this remains a political hurdle, they agreed that at this point few matters brought to the Council take the form of a classic inter-State dispute threatening international peace and security.

Several speakers called the recent initiative to invite the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs to give the Security Council a *tour d'horizon* a useful contribution to conflict prevention. There was some disagreement, however, on the success of the initial briefing. One discussant commended the idea, but regretted that it did not generate debate. It would have been better, according to this speaker, if the briefing had focused on one or two topics. Another participant agreed that it would be more useful to receive an in-depth assessment of just a few "hot issues" from the Secretariat. A third speaker defended the utility of a briefing on all of the preventive initiatives being undertaken by the Department of Political Affairs, adding that perhaps it should be followed by a question-and-answer session. Another participant found the session to be of little value and would not repeat it.

More generally, however, members emphasized the importance of the interaction between the Secretariat and the Security Council, especially in the area of preventive diplomacy. As one participant put it, there is a limit to how far the Council can go on its own because of concerns about national sovereignty. Another discussant suggested that the Council regularly set aside time to obtain an overview of what the Secretariat is doing in the area of prevention and what challenges it is facing at that point.

Regardless of the improvements made at Headquarters, cautioned a speaker, weaknesses in the United Nations presence in the field pose a significant obstacle to conflict prevention that needs to be addressed. There are insufficient preventive mechanisms on the ground, such as early warning systems, and persistent gaps between peacekeeping mandates and resources. Other participants, however, pointed to the setting up of the United Nations Office for West Africa as a positive step towards conflict prevention and peacebuilding in the field.

Several participants commented on the importance of post-conflict peacebuilding in the work of the Security Council. As one speaker noted, the concept will continue to evolve and develop as, increasingly, it is considered in the drafting of mandates. To shorten interventions and avoid the return of conflict, peacekeeping operations should lay the groundwork for the peacebuilding mechanisms to follow. This substantive relationship, in the speaker's view, underscores the benefits of a high level of interaction between the Council and the Peacebuilding Commission. Despite frequent calls for a more organic relationship between peacekeeping and peacebuilding, commented a second interlocutor, it has not happened in practice. Peacebuilding should be assigned a higher priority, both when mandates are crafted and when peacekeeping troops are withdrawn.

Partnerships with regional organizations

Many participants noted the importance of forging partnerships with regional organizations. One commented that coordination between the Security Council and regional organizations has improved in recent years, as illustrated by the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur. However, it was pointed out that such partnerships could make the process of decision-making more difficult. The Council, observed a participant, operates on the basis of consensus, not only among its 15 members, but, increasingly, with regional and subregional organizations, such as the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the European Union. Several members cited United Nations cooperation with ECOWAS on Guinea as an example of a particularly productive partnership.

One discussant noted that the Charter (Article 52 (2)) lays out a sequence of steps with regard to conflict prevention and resolution. Crises should be addressed first at the bilateral level, then at the regional level and only later at the level of the Security Council. The tendency to start such negotiations at the United Nations should therefore be avoided. According to another discussant, this suggests both that Council members should listen more attentively to messages from regional bodies and that the latter should be given more of an opportunity to complete their prevention efforts in cases where they are the first to address an emerging crisis.

It was pointed out that regional organizations often have special local knowledge and other comparative advantages that the Security Council should use whenever possible. Sometimes the United Nations should provide leadership, but often leadership should come from the regional organization. The key is to avoid rigid approaches in favour of open discussion and consensus-building.

There was extensive discussion of whether the United Nations should support African Union missions financially. It was contended that regional peacekeeping missions authorized by the Security Council, such as the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), are often not provided sufficient financial and logistical support. Though agreeing that the United Nations does not provide enough support to the African Union, another discussant argued that if the United Nations provides financial support for an operation, then it should have some say over how it is run. It is legitimate, according to the speaker, to ask why the United Nations should financially support an operation over which it has no control. Other participants argued that the Council should support regional missions that help to carry the burden of maintaining international peace and security, especially when the regional mission is authorized by the Council. A discussant countered that there is general agreement among the permanent members of the Council that assessed contributions should not be used to fully fund regional operations. Assessed contributions, however, could be used to cover part of a mission's cost, as is the case in Darfur and Somalia.

One member spoke at length about AMISOM, the African Union force authorized by the United Nations. In the participant's view, the act of authorization suggests that the Security Council recognizes the mission as being important and deserving of adequate support. Should the African Union be unable to lead the mission effectively, it should be put under United Nations control. The support packages that have been provided have been insufficient. The reach of Somali-based pirates underscores the fact that the situation there is a clear threat to international peace and security. The Council, however, has given only minimal consideration to this very serious threat. Why has the Council devoted so much more attention to Chad, where the presence of United Nations troops has been controversial? The speaker called for a more even-handed approach and for clear, visible criteria to determine why assessed contributions should be used in one place and not another.

There were also calls for greater clarity in how the relationship between the Security Council and the African Union Peace and Security Council should work in practice. In that regard, the Union's request that the Council suspend the indictment of Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir by the International Criminal Court was discussed at length. There was some confusion about whether the Council had received a formal request from the African Union, although several participants confirmed that such a request had been received. Urging Council action on the

matter, one participant contended that the Council should pay close attention to requests from a regional group with special local knowledge. Another speaker countered that the Council has not addressed the petition because there is no unity on the issue. Some participants suggested that, even if the Council cannot take action on the request, some sort of response is warranted. One urged that this be done as soon as possible.

A participant made the case for a closer relationship with the European Union also. He suggested that the Security Council stop in Brussels on its next mission. Some other participants agreed. There is a lot of capacity at the European Union. For example, one discussant suggested that, in certain situations, the Union's rapid reaction force could make a critical contribution to United Nations peace operations.

Qualitative benchmarking: assessing the work of the Security Council

The first round-table session also featured a broad-ranging discussion of how to take stock of the work of the Security Council. A number of participants offered general assessments. As one put it, the Council is as exciting as it is frustrating. It can be a stage for mere performance on certain issues, but it can also be an indispensable body that tackles challenges no one else would venture to address. According to another member, the Council must always strive to improve its performance in order to meet the unending challenge of making itself "more accountable, more workable and more meaningful".

The issue of accountability was raised by a number of members. Greater accountability, in their view, is required to boost the effectiveness and efficiency of the work of the Security Council. In response, one member pointed to the absence of widely accepted qualitative benchmarks that could be used to assess its work, a subject raised in Professor Luck's background paper for the workshop. This participant proposed that the Council give Professor Luck the task of drafting a follow-up paper addressing how to develop a system of qualitative benchmarking. The Council could then meet in a "mini-retreat", perhaps an afternoon or dinner workshop, to discuss the results. Several participants agreed that this could be helpful, although the development of such measures would not be easy.

Session II
Working methods and subsidiary bodies

Moderator:

Ambassador Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti
Permanent Representative of Brazil

Commentators:

Mr. William K. Grant
Minister Counsellor
Permanent Mission of the United States

Ambassador Raff Bukun-Olu Wole Onemola
Deputy Permanent Representative of Nigeria

Ambassador Nawaf Salam
Permanent Representative of Lebanon

During the second round-table session, participants discussed a wide range of issues relating to the Security Council's working methods and subsidiary bodies, including strategies for encouraging genuine debate in Council consultations, the role of thematic debates, the responsibilities of the President, cooperation with other United Nations organs, outreach to non-members of the Council, relationships with the media and Council missions. A recurring theme throughout the session was the need to balance transparency and inclusiveness in the Council's working methods with its overall efficiency and effectiveness.

Perspectives on the working methods of the Security Council

Participants noted the progress that has been made in improving working methods over the years and applauded the Security Council's ability to change, adapt and continually renew itself. Several speakers suggested that a continuous, incremental process of reform would best allow the Council to absorb changes without compromising productivity.

Several participants, noting the heavy workload and output of the Security Council, made suggestions for streamlining its work. One pointed out that much of what the Council does is a function of the calendar. For example, monthly, quarterly or biannual mandate reviews are scheduled long in advance, so the timing of such reviews rarely matches the course and pace of events on the ground. The speaker suggested that, at the beginning of each year, the Council examine the review periods for all items on the agenda with a view to rationalizing them and ensuring that their frequency reflects the relative importance of each item. Along similar lines, another speaker suggested that the Council, with the help of the Secretariat, undertake an annual assessment of output to determine whether there is any redundancy in presidential statements or resolutions and whether their texts can be shortened or clarified.

According to several speakers, incoming members are at a substantial disadvantage in having to begin their term on the Security Council without the same repository of knowledge on working methods as the permanent members. They may be less aware, for instance, when changes are instituted. One member cited adjustments in the pattern of consultations with regional groups as a case of a change they were unaware of until the issue was raised. Incoming members were advised to pay attention to working methods early on so as to be better placed to trace any changes that are made. In that regard, Japan's contributions in developing the working methods handbook were widely praised by the participants.

Subsidiary bodies

The work of the Security Council's subsidiary bodies and the role of the Chairs of the various committees were briefly discussed. One member spoke of the critical outreach role of committee Chairs, as they serve as the public face of the Council on the specific issue that each committee handles. More of this targeted outreach by individual members would be helpful. Several concerns were also voiced. One participant criticized the selection process for the Chairs of subsidiary bodies, urging more transparency in, and the democratization of, that process. The speaker also questioned whether there were any particular rules that would preclude

permanent members from chairing sanctions committees. Another speaker raised the issue of the working methods of the subsidiary bodies, questioning why they operate on the principle of consensus and unanimity rather than following the practice of the Council as a whole.

Outreach

There was a lively discussion of the Council's outreach activities, including to other States Members of the United Nations, contact groups, groups of friends, Chairs of the Peacebuilding Commission's country-specific configurations, representatives of regional organizations, civil society and members of the press. A central theme was the need to balance transparency and inclusiveness with efficiency and effectiveness. Some contended that efficiency should not preclude openness, underscoring the utility of regular meetings with other groups. One participant spoke of the value, for instance, of regular outreach by Council members with their respective regional groups. Several speakers applauded the Council's growing willingness to allow access to non-members, including through the use of informal interactive dialogues. Others, however, felt that more needed to be done to give non-members a chance to be heard and have their views taken into account. Arria-formula meetings were also commended as useful outreach opportunities, although several participants suggested that they have become a little stale. At recent meetings, there had been a low level of Council representation and little genuine interaction with representatives of non-governmental organizations, who mainly read prepared statements. This observation led to a call for a new type of Arria meeting with a refreshed format.

According to several speakers, the Security Council has made greater strides in outreach than it is generally given credit for. Non-members, of course, have always been able to participate in the Council's formal open debates. Some participants cited opportunities for expanded outreach activity. For example, the Council's annual report to the General Assembly often leads to little more than a debate about the reform of the Council. It was suggested, therefore, that the President of the Assembly split the annual debate into two separate debates: one on Council reform and one on the actual work of the Council. The latter could provoke a more interactive exchange, in which the 15 Council members could receive, and subsequently discuss, candid feedback from the broader membership. This participant also lamented the usually sparse attendance at the President's briefings on the Council's monthly programme of work.

What non-members lack, claimed one speaker, is interaction on specific issues rather than participation in open debates. Perception matters, underscored one member, and the prevailing perception is that, when it comes to transparency, inclusiveness and accountability, the model is broken. Another participant countered that "the real business of the Security Council is not dealt with in the open". While Council proceedings have become more open, the speaker cautioned that openness should not become an end in itself at the risk of losing the advantages of having a place for confidential negotiations. Council consultations were conceived as private gatherings of Council members to discuss serious issues of which the Council is seized. The problem over the years has been a trend towards too much observation by outsiders. While the Council may be "the best show in town", that does not mean that it should be open to everyone. Along similar lines, other speakers raised

concerns about the confidentiality of consultations and, in particular, the prevalence of leaks.

One participant raised two issues related to inclusiveness. The first concerned whether the heads of the country-specific configurations of the Peacebuilding Commission should be permitted to speak in consultations. According to this speaker, the rule should be extended so that Chairs who are not members of the Council are allowed to participate in consultations on those situations. For small and medium-sized delegations, it can be useful to have experts from other countries provide backup on certain issues. While Council rules preclude non-nationals from entering the consultation room, there have been a few cases where a Council member has included non-nationals in its delegation.

Several members, while acknowledging that groups of friends can be very helpful in some situations, regretted that elected members often receive second-class status relative to countries belonging to such groups. Often, non-members of the Security Council who are members of groups of friends are better informed on particular issues than are some of the non-permanent members of the Council. One participant contended that the substantive quality of the work of groups of friends is usually enhanced when taken up by the Council as a whole.

Another participant raised the issue of the Security Council's relationship with the press, citing complaints over new rules put in place owing to work on the United Nations capital master plan and the temporary relocation of the Council Chamber. These concerns should be seen in the broader context of the press coverage of the United Nations and its overall public image. There has been a trend towards more erratic and less informed coverage, with fewer New York-based correspondents covering the United Nations in a sustained and knowledgeable way. In this speaker's view, the entire United Nations, including the Council, should do some hard thinking about its communications strategy to avoid a situation where only bad news gets reported. Responding to these concerns, another participant agreed that there is a collective interest in keeping high-quality journalists at the United Nations. The Council has asked the Secretariat to help journalists who are being charged a fee for the use of space under the new rules.

The task of speaking to the press about issues on which the Security Council is deeply divided could be quite challenging, noted one speaker. Another pointed out, however, that press statements by the President are generally written out and negotiated with all 15 members of the Council. Remarks to the press, on the other hand, may be more vague and generic, but sometimes they, too, have to be negotiated. In cases where the Council is divided, the President has no mandate to speak with the press other than in his or her national capacity.

Council consultations

There was a lively discussion of how to encourage genuine debate in Security Council consultations. In theory, these sessions are completely off the record, offering Council members a chance to engage in strategic and candid exchanges on issues of high priority and mutual concern. The reality, as described by many workshop participants, is strikingly different. Several underscored their disappointment with both the content and format of consultations, which tend to be neither interactive nor focused. According to several speakers, the common practice is for representatives to read statements, even in closed consultations, rather than to

engage in a real exchange of views. One participant estimated that 80 per cent of the statements delivered in consultations are the same as those delivered in the Chamber before the media and other observers. Another discussant contrasted the "sedate atmosphere" in the Council with that of the European Union, where 27 member States manage to engage in lively debate on a range of issues.

A series of specific ideas for making consultations more interactive and effective were voiced. For instance, several speakers commented that it would be helpful if members of the Security Council would agree to do away with prepared statements in consultations. A participant expressed doubt that this would actually foster a more interactive exchange, however, given concerns over confidentiality and the danger of leaks. Another pointed out that notes used in consultations are a means by which United Nations delegations communicate with capitals about what they plan to say in the Council and are not easily modified. If delegations found it necessary to read statements in consultations, it was suggested that they could at least abbreviate them.

One suggestion that received wide support was for the Security Council do away with the practice of maintaining a speakers' list during consultations. According to one member, when a recent session was opened without a list, "only those who had something to say spoke. We had fewer speeches. The discussion was short, fast-moving and informative, and then we moved on". One participant cautioned, however, that meetings would still need to be organized in a transparent way, making it clear why people were speaking in a particular order. Participants also spoke of the need to develop a culture within the Council in which not everyone feels compelled to speak on every issue in private consultations. This did not mean, one interlocutor pointed out, that Council members should address only issues in which they have a strong national interest. That would be contrary to the spirit and purpose of the Council, whose 15 members share the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, even when and where their countries do not have a stake.

One member noted that the more interesting a consultation gets, the more it becomes a negotiation and the more important it is to keep it closed. If consultations are nothing but smaller versions of public meetings, then there is no need to conduct them in a closed chamber. If, however, Council members start using consultations to actually negotiate on substance, then it would become essential to keep those sessions confidential, as originally conceived. Incoming members were urged not to give up too quickly on the issue of fostering debate. Bad habits are difficult but not impossible to break, observed one participant, who recommended that incoming members develop strong allies on the Council who share their desire to see change.

Negotiating texts

One member pointed out that most text is negotiated at the level of experts, but even at the expert level, members of the Security Council are often negotiating "pre-cooked" text that has been worked out among the permanent members. As the participant put it, "if members of the Security Council want the outcome of meetings to be pre-cooked, then they should not complain that they are boring". Sometimes, the most interesting debate takes place at the procedural level. The speaker noted the contrast with the 1990s, when deep and substantive negotiations often took place at the ambassadorial level. Participants pointed to some recent

instances where the quality of the Council's work benefited from having discussions taken up to the level of Ambassador, notably on the resolutions on the tenth anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000) and on Western Sahara.

The tendency for outcome texts to be "pre-cooked" was also discussed in the context of the composition of the Security Council in 2011, which will include five non-permanent members who aspire to permanent membership. One participant wondered whether they would prefer to be part of the small group of Member States that "pre-cook" or to seek more inclusive discussion among all 15 members. Another contended that the discussion of inclusiveness with non-members should also apply to the internal business of the Council. A trend towards more inclusiveness in the drafting of resolutions would create a sense of work that is "collectively done and collectively owned", thereby leading to greater effectiveness and legitimacy.

Several participants spoke of the tendency of members of the Security Council to see consensus decisions as the most effective ones. Some commented on their surprise at how strong the tendency is to work for unity. In one case, the debate could have been resolved in 15 minutes had it been put to a vote, but the Council ended up in consultations for 17 hours in order to secure unanimous support for a particular decision. Though the veto is rarely exercised in terms of actual voting, "you know it's there", commented another speaker. In this discussant's view, the desire of Council members to find a common position is genuine, constructive and highly commendable.

Open debates: balancing transparency and effectiveness

The subject of open debates generated another lively discussion. As one participant noted, the introduction to the Security Council's 2009-2010 annual report stressed the positive impact achieved through thematic debates. This finding illustrates the remarkable progress that has been made over the past decade on a number of thematic issues, including protection of civilians, children in armed conflict and women and peace and security. Citing a growing tendency for incoming Presidents of the Council to plan a thematic debate during the month of their presidency, some speakers commented that it can be a struggle for elected members to find an issue on which to "leave their mark" in the form of a presidential statement. One participant cautioned against focusing too much energy on planning a "set piece" thematic debate and thereby neglecting the rest of the agenda. Another urged that open debates should be held only when it is absolutely necessary to hear from non-members. In the speaker's view, the fewer the debates, the more productive the Council.

Several speakers agreed that open debates are not living up to their potential. Too often they are long, repetitive and boring. At their best, open debates serve to inform the larger United Nations membership and to elicit feedback from them. The first goal is being reached more often than the second, however. To increase the interactivity of open debates, it was recommended that non-members speak first, that Council Ambassadors not leave after delivering a statement, that presidential statements not be read until the end of the session, that a five-minute rule for speakers be imposed and enforced and that open debates be limited to the morning session only. The goal should be to find a format that allows non-members to speak,

to be listened to and to genuinely contribute to the debate, not just to serve as a showcase.

The role of the President

Participants also discussed the role of the rotating presidency of the Security Council, making some specific suggestions on how incoming members might approach their presidency. One spoke of the essential outreach role played by the President, whether through briefings to the press and non-members or meetings with the Secretary-General and the President of the General Assembly. According to another speaker, however, the United Nations system still does not give enough recognition to the President of the Council. The speaker added that some of the regional groups, for instance, did not seem interested in consulting with him during his presidency.

Participants underscored the need for each new President to take the role seriously and to think through the best way to approach it. One suggested, for instance, that the President host a monthly lunch for the members to discuss a single issue. This could serve as a brainstorming session on a particular question that the President would like to highlight, be it a specific conflict situation or a thematic issue. While the President has a certain degree of flexibility, one member pointed out that the Council's pace of work is very much dependent on the calendar. Relatively few events each month are under the President's discretion and thematic debates should be scheduled to fit the existing calendar. The speaker called for more debate on the monthly programme of work and for more strategic discussion among Council members of monthly priorities. The shortest Council sessions tend to be those where the programme of work is adopted, often with very little substantive discussion among permanent representatives. Another speaker asserted that some innovative approaches to using the presidency to shape the strategic direction of the Council had been taken in November 2010.

Council missions

There was a lively discussion of Security Council missions. Several participants pointed out that the Council's missions to countries on its agenda offer members an opportunity to meet actors, discuss issues, deliver messages and be exposed to a diversity of views. Thus, they provide opportunities for Council members both to educate themselves and to reach out to others, including a wide range of organizations and individuals, and not just to Government officials. Missions are therefore critical to the work of the Council, according to several speakers, despite their high cost and the burden they place on the host country. Missions to the Sudan, Afghanistan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo were cited as being particularly useful in this regard.

Suggestions for improving missions were also made. For instance, it was argued that more could be done beforehand to ensure that members of the Security Council are prepared to deliver a clear message to the people of the country or countries visited. The Democratic Republic of the Congo was cited as a case in point. The Council could have been better prepared to respond to questions there about the withdrawal of peacekeeping forces, according to one participant. It was suggested that more use could be made of "mini-missions", in which a smaller group of perhaps five Council members could visit a country and subsequently

report to the rest of the membership. This would allow the Council to undertake missions to areas less often visited, such as Western Sahara or the Middle East. Another participant disagreed, countering that what makes Council missions so valuable is that all 15 members see the same thing and have an opportunity to interact and discuss what they have seen. This participant pointed out that the sense of being collectively informed by impressions on the ground would be lost if the Council resorted to "mini-missions" and added that "[h]aving a report read to you by a subset of colleagues is not the same as being on the ground and understanding first-hand what we are dealing with".

Some speakers called for a combination of full and mini-missions. In their view, when the Security Council is seized of a situation as critical to international peace and security as the Sudan or Afghanistan, all 15 members should go on the mission. In other cases, sending a smaller group may be sufficient. The benefits would include cost savings and added flexibility, as a smaller, more agile mission could afford to stay in country for a few more days without creating an undue burden. However, participants expressed divergent views about whether or how such a selection should be made. Would Timor-Leste, for example, merit a full or a mini Council mission? Several participants cautioned against giving the impression that some countries are "more important" than others or that the Council has double standards. A speaker recommended, therefore, that mission size be presented as a reflection of the seriousness of the challenges faced, not of the relative importance of the country in question. Another felt that all missions should be open to all members.

Several suggestions were voiced for enhancing the impact of Security Council missions, regardless of their size. One commentator saw a need for more military expertise and contact with the military during Council missions. Another regretted that the Council did not make better use of its missions to Afghanistan and the Sudan. Although the missions were well prepared, with good terms of reference and a clear message to convey, Council members failed to meet afterward to share assessments of what they had seen. There should be greater effort to draw collective lessons from these missions. Similarly, another member felt that informal, lessons-learned discussions should be standard practice following all Council missions.

Session III
Lessons learned: reflections of the class of 2010

Moderator:

Minister Konstantin Dolgov
Deputy Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation

Commentators:

Ambassador Ertuğrul Apakan
Permanent Representative of Turkey

Ambassador Thomas Mayr-Harting
Permanent Representative of Austria

Ambassador Tsuneo Nishida
Permanent Representative of Japan

Mr. Guillermo Puente
Counsellor and Political Coordinator
Permanent Mission of Mexico

Ambassador Ruhakana Rugunda
Permanent Representative of Uganda

The moderator opened the session by stating that each non-permanent member leaves its mark on the Security Council's work during its two-year tenure. Moreover, some members may return to the Council before too long. He thanked the outgoing class for its contributions to the activities and practices of the Council, commenting that while two years may not seem a long time to permanent members, it does represent a significant portion of the Council's activity. In his view, much had been accomplished over the previous two years and the outgoing non-permanent members should be commended for their solid performance.

Council dynamics and the relationship between permanent and non-permanent members

Several participants stressed the sense of unity of purpose that underlies the work of the diplomats on the Security Council. As one member put it, Council members understand that they have a shared responsibility to maintain international peace and security. At times, this collective sense of responsibility can outweigh national interests. Others agreed, commenting that the collegial atmosphere generally extends to permanent and non-permanent members alike. On most issues, coalitions of interest and values do not distinguish between permanent and non-permanent members. A speaker cited human rights, the protection of civilians in armed conflict, working methods and women and peace and security as examples. One outgoing member noted that, in any case, relatively few items on the Council agenda were central to his country's sense of immediate national interest and that this had made it easier for his country to contribute to consensus-building. Another speaker commented that it is possible to achieve unanimity in the Council on many issues, even controversial ones. This discussant also cited consensus-building as a particularly encouraging feature of the Council's work. The premium placed on consensus necessarily instils cooperative attitudes. One participant nevertheless questioned whether most diplomats on the Council regularly put global interests ahead of national ones. Too often, diplomats pursue narrow, parochial interests rather than trying to serve broader global concerns.

Several participants returned to the themes of transparency and inclusiveness. Permanent members, it was said, do not always treat non-permanent ones as equal partners in the work of the Security Council. There is a tendency, for example, for permanent members to prepare texts of resolutions and to discuss their substance with interested parties without consulting the non-permanent members. In such cases, the latter may receive texts as a fait accompli without having an opportunity to offer substantive input. The permanent members also tend to elect chairs of subsidiary bodies at their discretion, without sufficient consultation. Other speakers countered that the permanent members should not bear all the blame for the Council's lack of transparency and inclusiveness. The non-permanent members could be more proactive, take the initiative to engage constructively with the permanent members and ask relevant questions that challenge the latter's prerogatives. There are, after all, 10 non-permanent members compared with only

five permanent ones. Another participant added that newly elected members can also bring fresh energy and ideas to the Council.

In that spirit, a speaker encouraged incoming delegations to perceive the Security Council as an evolving institution whose norms and values change over time. Seen over a 5 to 10-year period, the evolving work of the Council becomes much more perceptible, even though its daily activities may seem predictable or even static at times. Non-permanent members can help to shape the course of change in the Council. Though some may not be great powers or large countries, non-permanent members can contribute wisdom and innovation to the Council's work. They can bring diverse perspectives, at times challenging positions taken by the permanent members, even on high-stakes issues, such as the Middle East or various peace operations in Africa. Several participants asserted that the divide between permanent and non-permanent members has been exaggerated, as issue lines do not respect such distinctions and categories.

Subsidiary bodies

Incoming members were urged to participate in those subsidiary organs of the Security Council, including working groups and sanctions committees, which best reflect their national policy interests and goals. One participant commented that chairing the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict reflected his country's interest in international law and international humanitarian law. Likewise, its commitment to disarmament led it to chair the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004).

According to several speakers, chairing subsidiary organs gives non-permanent members leadership opportunities and creates additional space for making meaningful contributions to the work of the Security Council. Through their leadership of subsidiary organs of the Council, new members could uphold standards of transparency, accountability and neutrality. Regarding the work of sanctions committees, one participant recommended that incoming members gain first-hand knowledge by travelling to sanctioned countries. Sanctions are not just a punitive measure; they can also be used as a lever to provide incentives for compliance with Council decisions.

Opportunities and challenges for new members

Outgoing members highlighted the unique challenges and opportunities that come with membership on the Security Council. Several commented on the sense of responsibility that comes with handling peace and security issues that other organs do not. While there is a tendency to accentuate the negative, the Council is capable of achieving much good, as its actions in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Burundi and Timor-Leste have demonstrated. Another outgoing member commented on how effectively and persuasively the body responded to the missile test conducted by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. He saw the Council's handling of this situation as a model of constructive interaction among its members. The Council is often at its best when facing very difficult challenges.

One speaker cautioned the incoming members that two years is a condensed time frame in which to become an effective member of the Security Council. It takes six months alone to learn how the Council operates, particularly with regard to its procedures and working methods. An elected member then has only 18 months in

which to be productive. Nonetheless, much can be achieved by a non-permanent member within that time frame.

Another participant underscored the intensity of work that is experienced during the month that a member holds the presidency. Presidents of the Security Council must be prepared for surprises. When his country first served, it had to manage unexpected occurrences, such as the missile launch by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the Sri Lankan crisis. During the month, scheduled debates were held on Haiti, children and armed conflict and the settlement of disputes. When it again assumed the presidency, it addressed the raid on the Turkish flotilla headed to Gaza, the crisis in Kyrgyzstan and the torpedoing of the *Cheonan*, a ship of the Republic of Korea. None of these events could have been anticipated.

Advice to newly elected members

Some speakers stressed the value of tapping into the non-governmental organization community for ideas and information. One reminded participants that non-permanent members had had difficulty accessing reliable information during the 1994 Rwandan genocide. Fortunately, over the years, non-governmental organizations have helped to fill the information gap that existed at the time. For example, during the crisis in Sri Lanka in 2009, non-governmental organizations were an important source of information for the Security Council regarding events transpiring on the ground. Another participant commended the content of the website *Security Council Report* (see www.securitycouncilreport.org), which helped to facilitate the work of the speaker's mission. It is also important for non-permanent members to learn from and listen to the concerns of countries on the Council agenda. Elected members also can learn from one another and benefit from shared information and ideas.

Another common piece of advice was to make good use of the Secretariat. Those officials who are responsible for working with the Security Council were said to be of high calibre, to know their jobs well and to be willing to provide pertinent and timely information. To reinforce the point, one participant called the Secretariat an enormous asset to the Council, to the extent that non-permanent members could not function effectively without their assistance.

The importance of having a good team when entering the Security Council was also emphasized. One speaker stressed the importance of having a good legal adviser. Their status gives the permanent members special knowledge of the rules of procedure, which they use to their advantage and, at times, to the disadvantage of the non-permanent members. A good legal adviser can learn the Council's procedures and help his or her Ambassador to counterbalance this advantage. Legal advisers can also facilitate the work of non-permanent members when they chair subsidiary bodies, as this often entails substantial legal work. According to this speaker, the tendency for negotiations — and most of the work of the Council, for that matter — to be conducted at the expert level has underscored the need to have an excellent political coordinator and a strong group of experts.

The incoming members were advised that one area where a President of the Security Council can make his or her mark is in thematic debates. Some permanent members, however, have expressed concern that long thematic debates could take up a significant portion of the Council's time and distract it from other pressing work. According to one speaker, this challenge could be addressed by having new

members craft a thematic debate around an issue that the Council was already planning to discuss during the month of their presidency. Notwithstanding their original reluctance towards thematic debates, permanent members were now also increasingly organizing such debates during the month of their presidency. The one organized by China on cooperation between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations proved particularly useful.